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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SOCIALLY INCLUDING A 'RESISTANT PEOPLE':
INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND THE ROMA IN ITALY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY
MARY MCSWEENEY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
MAY 2012

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challenged and encouraged me during this project, even if you did not know what I was doing or why I was doing it.

For there never lived an abstract Gypsy, or a ‘form’ or ‘archetype’ according to Plato’s or Jung’s conception, at any point in history or in any corner of the world. We are a *people*, genuine and variegated. We are not factory-produced mannequins on conveyor belts that use a single pigment, or equip us with a single Indic tongue.

– Damian Le Bas (Irish Traveller)

PREFACE

It is perhaps only natural to categorize things, people, and events. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that doing so could limit one's conception of that thing, person, or event. Also, one should keep in mind that individual A might characterize individual B differently than individual B identifies himself or herself (see Avvertenza [Foreword] of Piasere, 2004; introduction of Taylor, 1994). Many of the labels that refer to the Roma are problematic, as they tend to perpetuate stereotypes. Moreover, as Piasere (2004) maintains, Roma identity is continuously negotiated through interactions among the Roma as well as between the Roma and non-Roma, or Gadjé.

In following the EU's use of the term "Roma," this thesis refers to this population as such. "Gypsy," "Romani," and "Irish Traveller" are other labels associated with this diverse population. Though each of these terms is used in official policy – and even amongst the Roma themselves (Bravi and Sigona, 2006) – "Gypsy" is generally thought to be a pejorative term imposed on the Roma by non-Roma (Sigona, 2005; Piasere, 2004; Hancock, 2002). For the purposes of this thesis, "Gypsy" will be used only when referring to a population that comprises the Roma as well as those characterized, more or less, by similar circumstances (e.g. Sinti and Irish Travellers; those with similar lifestyles, linguistic backgrounds, and heritages).

Some also consider "Roma" to be an "umbrella term" that includes various types

of “Gypsies” (see for example FRA, 2010)¹, yet a distinction is often made between the Roma, the Sinti, and the (lesser-known) Camminati in Italy. In general, it is believed that the Sinti migrated from the Balkans to various regions in Northern Italy; the Roma arrived in Italy from the Adriatic Sea, in the south; and the Camminati reside mainly in Sicily, but they travel throughout the country during part of the year (Sigona, 2005). While “Roma and Sinti” is often used to refer to this population in Italy, at other times only the word “Roma” is used – for instance, in both cases, in policy reports and historical accounts. Though this thesis does not specifically attend to the Sinti or the Camminati, the educational circumstances concerning the Sinti in Italy appear to be rather similar to those of the Roma.

¹ On the other hand, Piasere carefully accounts for various Gypsies that are dispersed throughout Europe, and who, in large part, appear to be part of a “web” of Roma/Gypsy families.

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ABSTRACT

As “the situation of the Roma” in Europe has grown increasingly concerning, the European Union (EU) has urged Member States to promote the social inclusion of this diverse population. While the EU has challenged Member States to implement intercultural education, Italy has claimed its own “via Italiana” (or “Italian way”) as to how it is going about this process. In an attempt to better understand intercultural education and the role of education in social inclusion projects, this paper aims to address the following questions: What are some of the implications of the intercultural educational initiative currently underway in Italy with regard to the Roma, and how do they interact with other factors, such as housing conditions? More generally, what are some of the promises as well as some of the shortcomings of intercultural education for fostering a peaceful coexistence and a semblance of shared understanding in a diverse society? By reviewing the circumstances of the Roma, and considering the contributions of the INSETRom project and the Community of Sant’Egidio, the author reflects on the implications of intercultural education and the potential ways in which this educational paradigm facilitates identity-formation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

...l'idea di rieducare¹ gli zingari ha sempre ossessionato la società dominante fin da quando, tra Settecento e Ottocento, cominciarono a configurarsi gli stati-nazione

[...the idea of re-educating the Gypsies has always obsessed dominant society since, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the nation-states were beginning to take shape].

– Bravi and Sigona, 2006, p. 858

It is nowadays both natural and common to think of oneself as being from a certain territory or nation, asserting for example that the United States is “my” country. And yet, not everyone can so resoundingly claim to belong to a particular place. Through the so-called “clash of civilizations” based on differences between cultural or religious beliefs (Huntington, 1996), instances arise in which significant numbers of people are persecuted, if not displaced. In this case, the conquered (and perhaps exiled) group becomes evidently less welcome in what they may have once called “home”; and in turn it is more difficult for them to declare a homeland. Further, the question comes about, what should be done with these people?

To take a more specific case, one might consider the pressing question currently posed by the European Union (EU): What should be done with the Roma? To be sure, the urgency of this matter is rooted in the complexities of this rather heterogeneous group of people that has inhabited numerous countries and withstood various forms of

¹ The Italian word *rieducare* translates as both “to re-educate” and “to rehabilitate.”

discrimination throughout much of history. Considering the diverse makeup of the Roma, determining what to do with “them” evidently presents a particular problem, or scenario, which differs from resolving what to do with other populations. That is, the intricacies of this specific situation complicate the objective of identifying a solution to “dealing” with “them,” perhaps *particularly* in a diverse society; thus the pressing nature of this issue and the importance of this thesis. Moreover, because of their nomadic, “unintegrable” (Cahn & Guild, 2008), and even ‘resistant’ way of being (Piasere, 2004), the Roma have been continuously categorized as different than “us,” “other,” and, as Luca Bravi and Nando Sigona (2006) suggest, therefore in need of re-education, or rehabilitation. In this regard, the rather unconventional nature of the Roma has vexed this rehabilitation mission and haunted the legitimacy of nation-states since they were conceived.

As “a unique political and economic union between 27 European countries” (i.e. nation-states, or EU Member States), the EU has assumed the responsibility of deciding what to do with persecuted and exiled peoples, who are also classified as minority populations (European Union, n.d.). Though the specific “situation of the Roma” is not entirely a recent issue, it was at the Lisbon European Council in 2000 that the EU launched the initiative to promote the social inclusion of minority populations, including the Roma (European Commission, 2004). To clarify, the EU defines *social inclusion* as

a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have a greater

participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights. (European Union, 2004, in World Bank, 2007, p. 4)¹

With regard to the Roma, the EU has challenged Member States to endorse and facilitate social inclusion by improving access to education, employment, healthcare, and housing. Since 2000, it has surveyed the situation of the Roma both within the EU and beyond its relatively porous borders. And as recently as April 2011, the EU continues to urge for more “robust” monitoring as it collaborates with Member States and other intergovernmental organizations in order to achieve its mission (European Commission, 2011; European Commission, 2004). Again reflecting on Bravi and Sigona’s remark above, it appears that re-educating, rehabilitating, civilizing, and now socially including the Roma in dominant society have been and are still proving to be daunting tasks.

Purpose

Considering Bravi and Sigona’s use of *rieducare*, which refers to the re-education of the Roma, it appears valuable to explore the ways in which education may be used to answer the age-old question of “what to do with them.” In terms of the educational program of the broader social inclusion project, the EU has proposed that all Member States adopt the model of intercultural education (European Commission, 2004). The EU has pushed Member States to promote social inclusion of the Roma not only with regard to education, but also in terms of improving access to employment, healthcare, and housing. With regard to its educational initiative, however, Italy has claimed its own “via Italiana” (“Italian way,” or “Italian model”) of intercultural education. For example, following the Ministro della Pubblica Istruzione’s (Italian Ministry of Public

¹ A clear, concise definition of *social inclusion* does not appear to be included on the EU’s website or policy reports cited in this thesis. Therefore, the description provided by the World Bank serves the purposes of this discussion.

Education's) 2007 report entitled *La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l'integrazione degli alunni stranieri* (*The Italian way to intercultural school and the integration of foreign students*), Gobbo, Ricucci, and Galloni (2009) contend, "contemporary Italian educational discourse has from the beginning privileged intercultural education to promote...an alternative to assimilation and to the construction of bounded ethnic communities" (p. 7).

Despite Italy's purportedly long-standing sponsorship of intercultural education, both the media and policy reports suggest, if not affirm, that Italy is struggling with the overall social inclusion project (see for example Moore, 2008; European Commission, 2004). While Italy is not alone in violating European human rights laws², though not directly on account of its educational initiative, this thesis will explore the general approach Italy is taking to attend to "the situation of the Roma" as it aims to address the following questions: What are some of the implications of the intercultural educational initiative currently underway in Italy with regard to the Roma, and how does this initiative interact with other factors, such as housing conditions? More generally, what are some of the promises as well as some of the shortcomings of intercultural education for fostering a peaceful coexistence and a semblance of shared understanding in a diverse society?

Literature Review

As this thesis explores two interconnected issues – intercultural education on the one hand, and the Roma on the other – it is first necessary to distinguish what the

² In 2008, the Italian government forcefully evicted many Roma from their homes, thus raising concerns regarding the fundamental right to housing (OSCE, 2009; European Commission, 2004; European Roma Rights Center, 2000).

literature conveys about these issues, separately and as they relate to each other. Often considered synonymous with (Cushner, 1998a) or a “cousin” of multicultural education (Pampanini, 2010a), intercultural education arose out of a response to diversity and has been included in pedagogical discourse for several years now. In addition, Kenneth Cushner (1998a) and Giovanni Pampanini (2010a) maintain that this educational model has evolved differently and to varying degrees around the world, and that it can take on a range of meanings at different times, in different places, and by different people. As for the Roma, while scholars and policymakers (and even the Roma themselves) are still determining the origins of this population, it is commonly accepted that their history dates back to “no earlier than the year 1000” (Hancock³, 2002, p. 9). Nevertheless, when seeking to understand and speak about this population it is, first and foremost, essential that one acknowledges their diverse make-up. Conceptualizing intercultural education and the Roma, in turn, shapes how these two issues interact.

Defining *intercultural education* appears to be a challenge, yet for the purposes of this thesis it is useful to refer to the description provided by Francesca Gobbo (2000), Professor of Intercultural Education and Anthropology of Education at the University of Turin:

L’istruzione interculturale privilegia l’attenzione alla diversità culturale e promuove una cultura del rispetto e della valorizzazione dell’*altro*, [come] mira a favorire la compresione reciproca e costruire relazioni interpersonali e intergruppo...

³ Ian Hancock, who serves as Professor of Linguistics and Director of The Romani Archives and Documentation Center at University of Texas at Austin, is of Romani (or Roma) descent and among the foremost scholars with regard to tracing the language and history of the Roma. In 1998, former President Clinton, who is also of Romani descent, appointed Hancock to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. Hancock has also served as a representative of the International Romani Union for the United Nations and UNICEF (Hancock, 2002).

(Intercultural education privileges the attention to cultural diversity and promotes a culture of respect and valorization of the *other*, [as it] aims to favor mutual understanding and construct more harmonious interpersonal and intergroup relations...) (pp. 9-10; Gobbo's emphasis)

Further, Gobbo (2000) asserts that intercultural education promotes the “*inclusiva partecipazione*” (“*inclusive participation*”) of students, including immigrants, as it strives for justice and solidarity and advances human rights (p. 10; Gobbo's emphasis). Though Francesco Susi (1999), another Italian scholar, characterizes intercultural education similarly, this description is not entirely an Italian construction of the intercultural education model. As Pampanini (2010a) avers, “The needs for intercultural education and intercultural dialogue in various forms have become universal, since all peoples have the obligation to participate in – and take responsibility for – world peace, balanced sustainable development, and democratic dialogue among civilizations to create the ‘capacity to live together’” (p. vii). In addition, according to Verena Taylor (1997), the Council of Europe advocates intercultural education as a means of promoting awareness of cultural belonging and respect for each other. She continues that through dialogue as well as recognition of and appreciation for difference intercultural education aims to impart skills such as learning to communicate and to live together with people from different backgrounds. Cushner (1998a), also, affirms that intercultural education aims to combat prejudice and racism; to facilitate respect for others, cooperation, and intercommunication skills; and to identify commonalities while recognizing and appreciating difference.

Whether characterized as a “clash of civilizations” or something else, the literature reveals that human interaction is a fact – and not entirely a new one,

considering that Montesquieu and Kant concerned themselves with its consequences several centuries ago. As a result of interaction, and migration, it is inevitable that people from different walks of life will come into contact and that such encounters may result in violence and cruelty (Levy, 2000). Learning to live with diversity has become inescapable, and scholars argue that education serves a unique, critical purpose in this regard (see for example Cushner, 1998a). As Cushner (1998a) states,

Although education alone cannot change the face of many problems that exist today, it can influence the future by preparing the minds of young people to include a diversity of viewpoints, behaviors and values. (p. 2)

While Cushner (1998a) proposes that *multicultural education*, a term that generally refers to the recognition of difference and is more commonly used in the United States and Canada, and *intercultural education*, which typically involves cooperation and dialogue and is more frequently used in Europe, can be discussed interchangeably, he attests that “intercultural education is more proactive and action oriented than multicultural education” and that this kind of education involves cooperative learning and an acknowledgement of similarities amongst differences (p. 4). Further, he notes that intercultural education requires *confrontation* – rather than passive interaction – and that this is “unnatural”; that is, because humans are generally not accustomed to engaging in such open dialogue this form of education actually has the capacity to *provoke* violence and cruelty. According to Cushner (1998a), “particularists” view multicultural/intercultural education as a means of educating the “other” to be “successful” in dominant society, whereas “universalists” consider multicultural/intercultural education to involve all students. Therefore, depending upon how teachers implement educational paradigms learning can be cast as assimilation, or it can become a

more inclusive, pluralistic process. The way that intercultural education is presented, then, requires minimizing the negative outcome of violence and cruelty – or adopting the type of approach that Jacob Levy (2000) calls the “multiculturalism of fear.”

While Italian anthropologist Leonardo Piasere (2004) remarks that concerning oneself with the history of the Roma may be somewhat of a fixation, historical accounts, for instance by Bravi and Sigona (2006), suggest that this is indeed a critical first step toward seeking to comprehend the situation of the Roma and therefore knowing “what to do” with “them.” As the literature affirms, this ‘grand story’ is exceptionally varied and still contested. Nevertheless, by now it is acknowledged that the Roma have resided in various European countries and endured centuries of persecution, including forced labor (otherwise considered slavery) in Eastern Europe; genocide under Nazi and Fascist regimes during World War II, and in 1999 in former Yugoslavia; and forced settlement and forced sterilization throughout much of Europe (European Commission, 2004; Piasere, 2004). Additionally, it is generally believed that the Roma first emigrated from India around the 11th century in order to escape religious persecution, and that they reached Eastern Europe by the 14th century and Western Europe by the 15th century (Hancock & Karanth, 2010; Piasere, 2004).

More specifically, the presence of the Roma in Italy is not, by and large, a new phenomenon, as it is believed that they first appeared there as long ago as the late 14th century (OSCE, 2009; Piasere, 2004; European Roma Rights Center, 2000). On the other hand, recent and sizeable influxes of the Roma, who have migrated from different parts of Europe and from different circumstances, have posed a new situation for Italy as well as for much of Western Europe. Whereas the Roma that immigrated to Italy during the

15th and 16th centuries generally came from Eastern Europe, where they were likely subjected to forced labor, many Roma that have recently immigrated to Italy have escaped different sorts of difficult circumstances, this time resulting from political and economic transformation and also war (Piasere, 2004). Though an official count of the Roma in Italy is not available, as of 2011 it is estimated that approximately 140,000 Roma are residing there. This represents 0.23 percent of Italy's total population – one of the lowest percentages of Roma in Europe (European Commission, 2011). While most Roma in Italy have adopted a sedentary lifestyle by now (Piasere, 2004) and about half of them are Italian citizens (Storia, 2009), Piasere notes that it is not uncommon for Italians to refer to the Roma as “nomadi” (“nomads”) or to consider them foreigners.

In terms of educational programs involving the Roma in Italy, while the literature points to different periods in history when education was first provided for the Roma there, over time the Italian education system has pushed for more integrated schooling of Roma and non-Roma children. However, despite such measures as the Italian government's 1986 anti-discrimination declaration (Ongini, 2009) and the insertion of cultural mediators, ingrained stereotypes, low teacher expectations, and structural discrimination, such as segregated housing and cumbersome bureaucratic policies, plague the well-intentioned social inclusion project (Gobbo, 2009; European Roma Rights Center 2000). Pampanini (2010b) also notes that in 2008 the Italian Ministry of Public Education proposed that foreign students (including, but not limited to, Roma students) be educated separately from Italian students until the former become more proficient in the Italian language. Further, the Roma in Italy (and Europe in general) face discrimination not only in the education sector, but also in the other three target areas of

the social inclusion project – employment, healthcare, and housing (FRA, 2010).

Nevertheless, with regard to education, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE; 2009) points out, “According to Italian legislation, every child, regardless of legal status, has the right to education, which is obligatory until 16 years of age” (p. 27).

According to the Italian Ministry of Public Education (2007) and Gobbo et al. (2009), as Italy has advocated the integration of foreign students, including the Roma, for the past two decades it has also promoted the “via Italiana” of intercultural education. Moreover, the Italian Ministry of Public Education (2007) and the European Commission (2004) set forth that in a multicultural society, like Italy and other European countries, intercultural education is necessary and, indeed, that it holds the promise of facilitating identity-making projects, producing citizens, generating a knowledge-based economy, breaking down barriers between cultures and combating stereotypes, and promoting and protecting human rights. With regard to the identity of the Roma, scholars avow that despite being confronted with various forms of discrimination throughout much of history, the Roma are a ‘popolo-resistenza’ (‘resistant people’) (see for example Piasere, 2004). Meanwhile, Gobbo (2011) and Kowalczyk (2011) assert that (educational) projects geared toward “managing” diversity should do so with caution.

Methodology

In order to gain a deeper understanding of social inclusion projects – and more specifically, the intercultural educational initiative in Italy with regard to the Roma – this thesis aims to examine the framework of the EU regarding the social inclusion of minority populations, specifically the Roma; to address the intercultural educational

initiative underway in Italy, which is designed to promote the social inclusion of the Roma; and ultimately to distinguish some of the contributions and setbacks of the intercultural education paradigm, both in general and in Italy. The majority of the material surveyed will be scholarly, peer-reviewed research, and will be supplemented by policy reports. Additionally, in an effort to portray a more complete story of the situation in Italy, this paper will refer to a few, noteworthy news articles, and will discuss two endeavors that appear to significantly contribute to the intercultural education discourse there: (1) the Teacher In-Service Training for Roma Inclusion (INSETRom) project, which was coordinated by educational institutions from eight EU Member States; and (2) two of the programs of the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Christian community based in Rome. Thus, the author of this paper aspires to contribute to the field of comparative and international education in terms of synthesizing the discourse on the intercultural educational initiative in Italy with regard to the Roma. In doing so, it is important to remember that such programs are devised to promote and protect human rights at a time when, as Jacob Levy (2000) states, “cultural pluralism is a fact,” and in a place where we live, in the words of Immanuel Kant, ‘unavoidably side-by-side’ (as cited in Levy, 2000, p. 49).

After reviewing the intercultural educational initiative in Italy with regard to the Roma, the author will re-examine the particular context of Italy, reflecting for example on its relatively recent unification and the shifting perceptions of the “other” within the country. In doing so, the author will offer assessments of this initiative in Italy, where other forces, such as limited access to employment, healthcare, and housing, interact to affect the educational experience of the Roma. Finally, the author will ponder the

promises and pitfalls of intercultural education for fostering a peaceful coexistence and a semblance of shared understanding in a diverse society.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ‘GRAND STORY’ OF THE ROMA

Le Europe zingare...sono un prodotto della grande storia, fatta dalle politiche non zingare, la quale spiega gli attuali livelli di concentrazione e dispersione dei rom nel continente europeo, dove piccole discrepanze regionali possono essere attribuite a congiunture locali.

[The European Gypsies...are a product of the grand story, made by non-Gypsy policies, which explain the actual levels of concentration and dispersion, where small regional discrepancies can be attributed to a combination of circumstances particular to each locale].

– Piasere, 2004, p. 62

A Broad Overview of the History of the Roma

Though the history of the Roma is somewhat of an unresolved issue, it is believed that they emigrated from India around the 11th century in order to escape Muslim invasions. By the 14th century they had reached Eastern Europe after residing in various Middle Eastern countries along the way. Hancock and Karanth (2010) and Piasere (2004) report that the Roma emigrated in waves and to different territories, and Piasere further maintains that it is possible to speak of such, albeit fragmented, migrations as having occurred in three “waves”: the “first wave” appears to refer to the Roma migration from India around the 11th century; the “second wave” of the Roma to Western Europe refers to their migration from the Balkans after the beginning of the 15th century, possibly spurred by the end of slavery in Eastern Europe; and the “third wave” refers to

their migration from former-Yugoslavia and Romania, following the war in 1999¹. As both scholars and policy reports recount, the Roma have endured centuries of exclusion and discrimination, including slavery, genocide, and restricted rights, due to the various circumstances and policies of countries they have inhabited. For instance, in Eastern Europe many Roma served as slaves until the mid-1800s, and they were typically prohibited from traveling under Communism. Nevertheless, Piasere speaks of freedom and autonomy for well-behaved Roma that submitted to the authorities and paid taxes in Eastern Europe. Additionally, it is estimated that between 200,000 and 500,000 Roma were executed in concentration camps in various parts of Europe, including Italy, during World War II (Suddath, 2010; Piasere, 2004). Following World War II, throughout Europe, the Roma were forced to establish fixed residences, and were targets of forced sterilization and segregated schooling. During this time, Roma children were removed from their families and placed in non-Roma families or institutions in order to correct their “deviant” ways – a practice that has been introduced elsewhere, for instance with Australian Aboriginal children (Jones, 1997). And in 1999 in former Yugoslavia, the Roma community suffered the most devastating event it has experienced since World War II, when ethnic Albanians carried out an ethnic cleansing campaign against them (European Commission, 2004).

More recently, as the Roma continue to migrate to various Western European countries, they face hostility from the media, politicians, and the general public.

According to the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (2006), the Roma minority is among “the most marginalised and discriminated against populations in

¹ These three waves appear to be very rough estimations that encompass several years, possibly centuries, of multiple, ongoing Roma migrations.

Europe” (p. 20). Moreover, it seems that a general misunderstanding of the Roma minority extends sentiments of prejudice and discrimination, and challenges the potential for including them in society. Such ingrained beliefs are held not only by Italians but also by other Europeans, in general. Thus, the overall social exclusion of the Roma persists (European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia, 2006; Sigona, 2005).

Understanding the Contexts of the East versus the West

Anche se i rom costituivano gli ultimi gradini della stratificazione sociale ed erano spesso mal considerati e mal trattati, non hanno mai subito le politiche di negazione totale messe in atto in Occidente.

[Even if the Roma comprised the lowest rung of the social strata and they were often poorly considered and poorly treated, they never suffered the politics of total negation that has been put into action in the West.]

– Piasere, 2004, p. 35

Historical accounts of the Roma in Eastern Europe suggest that the circumstances they have encountered there have been rather different than those they have faced in Western Europe, both in centuries past and in present-day. For instance, under the “Balkan model,” the Roma in 15th century through much of 18th century Eastern Europe were highly controlled by the government as they were socioeconomically integrated on account of the tax system and/or their forced labor (Piasere, 2004). Piasere also asserts that, unlike the situation in various Western European countries, where large numbers of Roma have been deported², the Roma were never expelled from their “homeland” under Ottoman rule. In fact, Bulgarian records indicate that in 1475 the Roma were “well-integrated” into the tax system. Additionally, those living in all regions of the Ottoman empire were subject to this complex tax system (Piasere, 2004). Piasere further sets forth

² For example, thousands of Roma have been expelled from Italy and France over the past three years (European Union Roma Policy Coalition, 2009).

that despite the government's extensive surveillance of the Roma, the Roma "Balkan cosmopolitan" was generally free to live as he or she wished (e.g. in the city or countryside; establishing a fixed residence or adopting a nomadic lifestyle), as long as he or she paid taxes.

Scholars reveal that despite the discriminatory policies aimed at the Roma, various Eastern European countries have provided this population with some form of equality through the political and educational systems. For instance, in 1901 a Bulgarian amendment granted Gypsies (including non-Christian Roma, Muslim Roma, and nomadic Roma) the right to vote. Also, in 1920 Lenin officially recognized the Roma as a national minority (Piasere, 2004). Similarly, Piasere refers to Romania as "un incredibile laboratorio politico" ("an incredibly political laboratory") as its constitution (enacted in 1923) "riconosce l'uguaglianza di tutti i romeni 'senza distinzione di origine etnica, di lingua o di religione' (art. 8)" ("recognizes equality of all Romanians, 'without distinction of ethnicity, language, or religion' [art. 8]") (pp. 112-113). Moreover, he explains that in an era of "effervescenza democratica" ("democratic effervescence"), in which numerous ethnic and religious minorities formed associations at the regional and national levels, the Roma found a space for political activism (p. 113). Nevertheless, he comments that this democratic surge came to an end in 1938. Aside from political representation, Eastern Europe has provided educational opportunities, such as nursery schools, night schools, and a public university in Romania, for the Roma. And in 1992, about 500 Roma in Bulgaria had a degree – which, Piasere observes, is held in high regard in the West.

As the Roma continue to migrate to Western Europe, and the situation of the

Roma in the East collides with the situation of the Roma in the West, Piasere and others (see for example Soros, 2010) propose that the circumstances of the Roma in the West have been much different. Reflecting on the current situation of the Roma in Western Europe, George Soros (2010), Hungarian-American founder and chairman of the Open Society Institute, a private foundation that promotes democratic governance and human rights worldwide, states,

The situation is not so bad in Western Europe because fewer Roma live there, but the influx from the East is encountering social resistance. In Italy, the Roma are actually persecuted by the state, in violation of European law.

Moreover, from a historical perspective, the hierarchical system of Eastern Europe does not apply in the Western European context. Also, the “Western model,” which does not closely monitor the whereabouts and occupations of people, like the “Balkan model,” has permitted the Roma to pose as religious pilgrims from Egypt or as authority figures, for instance, in order to gather goods from those in power and then redistribute these goods amongst themselves (Piasere, 2004)³. In this way, Piasere affirms, the Roma have been able to reject the hierarchical model that emerged in the Balkans. He further notes that while records regarding the first Roma in Italy were kept, such documentation did not as strictly keep tabs on their whereabouts, and certainly not on their labor.

It is also worth mentioning that Piasere speaks of a variation of the “Western model” – the “Spanish model” – whereby the Roma were forced to adopt a sedentary lifestyle. This model did not explicitly involve genocide, except in the most extreme

³ Hancock (2002) offers an account that supports this notion of the Roma “pretending to be” someone else, in order to advance themselves in Western Europe. In *We are the Romani People*, he explains that after the Ottomans banished some Roma to Egypt, the Roma who made their way back to Europe declared that they were from Egypt. Though the Roma may not have originally been from Egypt, claiming to be from there may have better positioned them to succeed in Western Europe.

circumstances when the first objective of “ethnocide” or “total cultural assimilation” failed (pp. 54-55). Piasere alleges that a small percentage of the Roma remained nomadic under this model – which is, interestingly enough, also called the “Inclusion model.” On the other hand, one might recall that various countries, not only in Western European, have urged, if not forced, the Roma to establish fixed residences (Themelis, 2009; European Commission, 2004; Piasere, 2004). Still, as discussed below, it appears that this period of history was a precursor for even more horrific things to come, which would indeed have catastrophic consequences for the Roma in Europe.

As the Roma were migrating to Western Europe from the 15th century onward, anti-Gypsy legislation spread throughout much of the region; and it would appear that traces of such legislation are still lingering today in Italy, even as anti-discrimination policies are introduced. Believing the Roma (and Gypsies, in general) to be a different race, “deviant,” “asocial,” and “unintegrable” (Cahn & Guild, 2008), various Western European countries sought to assimilate them in the name of “l’edificazione dell’Europa moderna” (“the edification of modern Europe”) (Piasere, 2004, p. 49). As mentioned, hundreds of thousands of Roma were killed during World War II as they were sent to concentration camps throughout Europe (Suddath, 2010; Piasere, 2004). Further, anti-Roma sentiments are still felt across both Western Europe and Eastern Europe. While many Eastern Europeans feel that the Roma have disrupted public order, disdain for the Roma in Western Europe stems from the large influxes of Roma there (OSCE, 2009; European Commission, 2004).

History of the Roma in Italy

It is well-documented by now that the Roma migrated from the Balkans and arrived in Italy by the 15th century, and it appears that their migration intensified two and a half centuries later, following the end of slavery in Eastern Europe. Scholars also acknowledge that, similar to the reception of the Roma in other parts of Western Europe, the presence of the Roma in Italy was generally not welcomed. For example, legislation often banned the Roma from urban areas. Therefore, in order to gain protection and maintain a sense of security where they were living, many Roma inconspicuously offered locals services, such as peddling, fortune telling, and bartering outside the city walls (Gobbo, 2009). Nevertheless, as discussed below, the encounter and collision between the Roma and non-Roma has been a matter of continuous negotiation that has, overall, not tapered as more Roma have since migrated to Italy – and as Italy continues to face the challenge of “what to do with *them*.”

Notwithstanding the rather vigorous anti-Roma legislation that was spiraling throughout much of Western Europe beginning in the 15th century, it appears that the period between the 16th and 19th centuries was relatively quiet in terms of Roma actually coming into Italy. However, Gobbo (2009) sets forth that Roma immigration in Italy resumed when some of those from the Balkans made their way into Italy during both World Wars. During this period, the Roma in Italy were interned alongside Jews and political opponents. Though studies of the Roma during the Fascist period in Italy are limited, scholars explain that they were round up from Italian Slovenia and dispersed throughout other regions of Italy as well as within Slovenia (Bravi & Sigona, 2006; Piasere, 2004). For example, in the town of Agnone in the region of Molise (on the

Adriatic coast of central Italy), a camp was reserved solely for the Roma (and Gypsies, in general) – that is, “soggetti ritenuti pericolosi socialmente e razzialmente dal regime fascista” (“subjects thought by the Fascist regime to be socially and racially dangerous”) (Bravi & Sigona, 2006, p. 4).

It appears that the next half-century into the present day has seen an ebb and flow, but more recently a flow, of Roma migration in Italy. World War II was followed by another period of relative calm with regard to migration of Roma in Italy, until the 1960s. Subsequently, the 1960s Roma migration was followed by a migration of Roma from former socialist countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and later during the war in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Over the past ten years, Roma from Central and Eastern European countries, largely from Romania and also Bulgaria⁴, have immigrated to Italy (Storia, 2009). The range of circumstances of the Roma that have migrated over the past half-century, then, poses a particular challenge to Italy (and other countries that are experiencing such influxes of Roma from various parts of Europe). That is, as the Roma have arrived in Italy with different backgrounds, it appears that they have been expected to fit a specific, yet ambiguous, model of inclusion⁵.

History of the (Re-)Education of the Roma in Italy

The history of the education of the Roma in Italy is somewhat recent, considering that this population has appeared in Italy since the 15th century. Though most scholars accept that education was first offered to the Roma in Italy in 1965, it appears that

⁴ As a result of new visa regulations in 2002 and the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU in 2007, the Roma from these countries have been afforded greater freedom of movement in Europe (Storia, 2009).

⁵ The inclusion model is *specific* in that it is Italy’s own “via,” but it is *ambiguous* because it appears that the EU does not clearly define *social inclusion*.

educational projects date back farther than that year. In fact, taking such a scrutinizing look at history might further allow one to appreciate how and why subsequent educational programs have materialized. In other words, it is possible that recognizing such historical roots may aid one's understanding of such programs and general policies, like intercultural education and social inclusion.

In July 1943, during the Fascist regime in Italy, it was recommended that a school for Gypsy children at the concentration camps be built. Shortly thereafter, this recommendation was approved and a teacher, who was orphaned by war and taught in a rural Italian school, was appointed to begin lessons on the subject and history of Fascism. Researchers affirm that this method of teaching, in effect, made the Gypsy children subjects of Fascist Italy (Bravi & Sigona, 2006). Here it is possible to decipher the making of the "good" Italian Gypsy via national education. As Bravi and Sigona point out, similar to the rehabilitation (by way of forced labor) of Gypsy adults in Hungary, Gypsy children in Italy, including Roma children, were rehabilitated through education. That is, to put it straightforwardly, both systems exploited the Gypsies as they rehabilitated, or re-educated, them in order to be useful to the State⁶ (Bravi & Sigona, 2006).

In 1965 the Italian Ministry of Public Education, the Institute of Pedagogy of the University of Padua, and the Opera Nomadi (Nomad Works; Italy's largest Roma organization) established a separate schooling system called Lacio Drom (Pleasant Journey) for Roma children. Under this system, the curriculum was specifically designed

⁶Though there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the education of the Roma in Italy between the Fascist regime and 1965, it seems that as Fascism more or less dissolved in Italy so too did these particular educational programs.

for the Roma, in order to facilitate their transition to formal, mainstream education (Gobbo, 2009). By 1972, 60 Lacio Drom schools had been established and approximately 1,000 pupils attended regularly (Ivatts, 1974). Regardless of Lacio Drom's intentions regarding the "promozione sociale" ("social promotion") of the Roma (Bravi & Sigona, 2006), Gobbo (2009) affirms that Italian authorities instituted this education (i.e. 'civilization') program for the Roma upon realizing that these 'pariahs'⁷ would not leave Italy. In this case, one might make the connection to the similar measures that were taken by the United States with regard to the education of "delinquents," during the 19th century (Richardson, 1994). Like "delinquents" in the United States, the "impure," "deviant" Roma were considered dangerous and in need of salvation. Moreover, being in school meant that the children were off the streets and away from their parents⁸. In addition, Bravi and Sigona (2006) maintain that the documents from the 1960s point to the general acknowledgment of the backward ways of the Roma and the need to liberate them through education. Notably, a similar "liberation through education" mantra⁹ can be seen today as mass education purportedly spreads throughout nation-states (see for example Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992).

Over time, it was recognized that the Lacio Drom program was no more effective than "special schools" for children with disabilities. In the Lacio Drom classrooms,

⁷ It is generally understood that the Roma have been regarded throughout Europe as 'pariahs,' as they do not easily "fit into" dominant society (see for example Piasere, 2004).

⁸ As Piasere claims, it is possible to identify two recurring themes regarding efforts to "solve" the 'Gypsy problem': (1) keeping Gypsy/Roma children from their parents for extended periods of time, and (2) keeping Gypsy/Roma children separate from Italian children and far from schools for Italian children until the former are "civilized" (in Bravi & Sigona, 2006).

⁹ For example, consider the theme of the 2011 Comparative and International Education Society annual conference, "Education is that which liberates."

Roma children continued to be excluded from the mainstream education system and society in general. These schools lasted from 1966 to 1982 and turned out to be mostly unsuccessful due, in part, to low teacher expectations. In 1982, realizing that the Lacio Drom schools unnecessarily segregated Roma children from non-Roma children, the Opera Nomadi revised the schooling of Roma children and pushed for the education of Roma children in mainstream Italian classrooms with non-Roma students. Under this system, there was to be an aid for every six Roma students that would act as an intermediary between the school and Roma families. Four years later, the Italian government issued a memo that declared that regardless of a child's or a parent's legal status, Roma children have the constitutional right to education. The 1986 memo also stated that discrimination is not to be tolerated by the Italian state (Gobbo, 2009; Ongini, 2009).

More recently, as Italian society continues to grapple with cultural pluralism, the Italian Ministry of Education has issued various memoranda regarding the education of “foreign” students, including the Roma. These memoranda, which together address the need for an intercultural, dialogue-driven approach that combats prejudice and discrimination in a pluralistic society, include the following: (1) the 1994 memorandum “Intercultural Dialogue and Democratic Coexistence: The Planning Engagement of the School”; (2) the 2006 memorandum “Guidelines for the Reception and the Integration of Foreign Students”; and (3) and the 2007 memorandum “The Italian Way to Intercultural Education and the Integration of Foreign Students” (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca, 2009; Ongini, 2009). While structural discrimination, such as segregated housing and schooling as well as bureaucratic policies, obstructs equal

access to education in Italy (European Roma Rights Center, 2000), the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights has acknowledged this type of barrier to education. In 2007, the landmark ruling of *D.H. v. Czech Republic* deemed that the segregation of Roma children in special schools is considered “unlawful discrimination” (European Union Roma Policy Coalition, 2009, p. 13) and that it obstructs a child’s right to education (O’Nions, 2010). Moreover, as the European Court of Human Rights and the EU monitor human rights in all Member States, Italy is subject to recognizing and promoting these rights – through, but not limited to, education.

The Roma in Present-day Italy

The make-up of the Roma in present-day Italy appears to be as diverse as the Roma in general. While many Roma in Italy reside in urban areas, often in campsites on the outskirts of town, and Rome and Naples are the Italian cities most densely populated by this population, they can also be found in smaller towns and in areas where they were rarely, if ever, found before, such as Val d’Aosta, Sardinia, and Sicily. Some researchers propose that the recent influx of Roma immigrants equaled, or perhaps outnumbered, the size of the Roma (and Sinti) population that was already present in Italy; however, it is difficult to confirm this since it might be merely a matter of increased visibility (OSCE, 2009; Piasere, 2004). Nevertheless, according to Piasere, as of 2004 there were at least 18,000 Roma refugees in Italy; and according to Storia, as of 2009 the total number of Roma in Italy (including Roma refugees) reached between 150,000 and 160,000. Research also suggests that the majority of Roma that reside in Italy are Christian, though the Roma that migrated from Bosnia are typically Muslim. Finally, it is also suggested that approximately half of the Roma in Italy are followers of the Evangelical-Protestant

movement, which began in California and traveled to Italy during the 1960s¹⁰ (Piasere, 2004).

Ethnographic reports, particularly those recounting the stories of the Roma in northwest Italy, describe tumultuous relations among the different “types” of Roma. For example, those who left Yugoslavia first did not attain refugee status, while those who left later did receive this status. This has created tremendous tension among Bosnian Roma, as it means that those who are refugees are entitled to more resources than those who are not considered refugees. Similar to Ogbu and Simons’s (1998) portrayal of voluntary immigrants “acting white,” Piasere (2004) avows, “i profughi [rom] si considerano piu ‘civile’” (“the [Roma] refugees considered themselves more ‘civil’”) and started acting like the Gadge (p. 88). On the other hand, the Roma that did not receive refugee status are identified by Italians as *cergasi*. Piasere affirms that this group accepts this identity and that they even refer to themselves as such, while they call the refugees the derogatory name *kaloperi*. Additionally, he sets forth that refugees have a positive perception of school, while those who did not attain refugee status are said to have a negative opinion of school. This, then, further supports the cultural-ecological theory of Ogbu and Simons regarding the education of minorities. Nevertheless, all children in Italy are obliged to go to school, and researchers note that teachers express general disappointment in the Roma, as a whole group (Gobbo, 2009; Piasere, 2004).

Common Stereotypes and Sources of Friction

As Nando Sigona (2005) remarks, stereotypes perpetuate the status quo (i.e. the social exclusion of the Roma). Therefore, it is valuable to take into account some of the

¹⁰ Piasere further elucidates that the Evangelical-Protestant movement is a means for the Roma to reinvent themselves—and, in turn, to renegotiate their relationship with the Gadge.

common stereotypes regarding the Roma – in general, but also particularly in Italy – as efforts to combat such generalizations are put into effect. The two most contentious stereotypes of the Roma in Italy that tend to dominate the general public's (and politicians') perception of this perplexing population are (1) that the Roma are still a migratory people and (2) that they can all be found begging on the streets. Scholars caution that, in fact, neither of these stereotypes depicts the majority of Roma in Italy (see for example Sigona, 2005; Piasere, 2004).

First, the nomadic lifestyle of the Roma, which clearly does not characterize *all* Roma, has been viewed as a dilemma in the larger Europe context, where incorporating this itinerant, variegated population into nation-states has been an ongoing struggle. In that regard, Piasere (2004) proclaims that prior to the Second World War the Roma in central and southern Italy were generally sedentary, while the Roma residing in northern Italy were, by and large, nomadic. Nonetheless, he maintains that distinguishing between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles is of little importance, since some Roma were mobile while others were sedentary. Moreover, Piasere points out that the state of the economy may contribute to such shifts from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle. Still, he concludes, “più dell'80% dei cosiddetti zingari in Europa sono da tempo sedentari” (“more than 80% of the so-called Gypsies in Europe have been sedentary for a long time”) (p. 14). Despite this fact, many Italians, including policymakers (see Ongini, 2009), still refer to the Roma as “nomadi,” or “nomads.”

Another source of friction between the Roma and Gadge in Italy is the popular belief that all Roma are beggars; that is, that they ask for money or charitable contributions, typically on the streets. Moore (2008), for one, calls attention to Italian

Prime Minister Berlusconi's ordering of the mandatory fingerprinting of the Roma, which Berlusconi believed would help track Roma children that were on the streets begging instead of attending school. As history informs us, though, fingerprinting – and cataloguing individuals, in general (e.g. by race, ethnicity, or “deviant” behavior) – has a long, suspect history in the United States and abroad (see Parenti's [2003] discussion of the fingerprinting of Native Americans, criminals, and convicts in India and the United States). However, in its call for recognition of the Roma as a minority, the European Commission (2004) reminds us that counting the Roma is not illegal as long as the Roma are not individually classified:

In its data protection rules [...] the EU has consistently affirmed that [data protection laws] apply to personal data, not to aggregate data about groups, nor data disaggregated by ethnicity or other criteria. (p. 37)

While it is likely that only a small percentage of Roma in Italy beg (OSCE, 2009; Sigona, 2005), Roma that do not engage in this activity are frustrated that things of this nature often peg them as an entire people (Brooks, 2010¹¹).

¹¹ In this article, Ethel Brooks identifies herself as a “US Romany woman.”

CHAPTER THREE

PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN ITALY

An Uncoordinated Project: The Four Target Areas of Social Inclusion

As mentioned above, the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA; 2010) reports that the Roma, in general, face discrimination in each of the four targets areas of the social inclusion project – employment, healthcare, housing, and education. Though the target areas are individually monitored, they interact in various ways and ultimately come together to produce the “situation of the Roma.” While such “situations” are comprised of the same four target areas across each of the EU Member States, all of which are obliged to promote social inclusion, the particular contexts of each Member State inevitably varies and presents rather different scenarios. By surveying the ways in which these target areas function – both independently and collaboratively – and proposing measures to improve their efficacy, the EU and its Member States aim to achieve social inclusion.

Regardless whether the four target areas are assessed discretely or collectively, it appears that monitoring and financially supporting the overall social inclusion project in Italy, especially as it relates to the Roma, has been tremendously challenging. Moreover, as of April 2011 the European Commission has acknowledged that monitoring and funding are critical components of this endeavor, and there is a renewed sense of urgency to promote and protect the rights of the Roma, specifically, through this project. Despite

the EU's Open Method of Coordination, whereby the EU provides financial support and oversees the social inclusion project and "Member States have the primary responsibility for Roma integration" (European Union, n.d.), researchers and policy reports contend that the challenge in Italy with regard to socially including this population stems from a lack of coordinated efforts, often at the local level¹ (Gobbo et al., 2009; Bravi & Sigona, 2006; OSCE, 2009). Whereas the European Commission (2004) succinctly deduces, "[local opposition is] a very powerful force for undermining social inclusion projects targeting Roma" (in Europe in general) (p. 40), Gobbo et al. maintain that this type of local action (which involves non-governmental organizations and schools) "enlightens one of the main characteristics of the Italian scenario" (p. 6). That is, they affirm,

in a situation of a lack of institutional initiatives, there is a great self-promotion of associations and the third sector. In this way, some needs, dealing with the increasing number of migrants, were satisfied just in time. (Gobbo et al., 2009, p. 6)

While it appears that these local initiatives may serve well-meaning purposes, Gobbo et al. recognize the "fragility of these kinds of initiatives" as the "continuity" and "efficacy" of such efforts are ultimately called into question by demands for reports and assessments (p. 6). Therefore, in Italy it appears that attempts to socially include the Roma are being made, especially at the local level, but that they are not always carried out in the most effective way possible. And as we will see below, involving the Roma themselves in this process has so far proven largely (though not entirely) unsuccessful in Italy.

Keeping in mind the proposed lack of coordination amongst various initiatives of the social inclusion project in Italy, in this section the author seeks to further understand

¹ Nevertheless, the EU does acknowledge that "policies in these fields are often handled by regional and local authorities" (European Union, n.d.).

the situation of the Roma residing there by examining the four target areas of the social inclusion project. Much of this information can be gleaned from a report by the OSCE (2009) entitled *Assessment of the Human Rights Situation of the Roma in Italy*. The OSCE's report came after its visit to Italy in 2008, which was necessitated by rising tensions over the purported increase in immigration, specifically involving the Roma², that culminated in the Italian government's declaration of a state of emergency in the regions of Campania, Lazio, and Lombardy the same year. Notably, the OSCE concludes:

...on the whole, the delegation considers the measures adopted by the [Italian] government, starting with the declaration of a state of emergency, disproportionate in relation to the actual scale of the security threat related to irregular immigration and the situation of the Roma and Sinti settlements... (p. 8)

Employment

In Italy, most Roma that live in settlements (also called camps) are unemployed or they may hold informal employment on account of their living arrangements, their inability to obtain a work permit, and/or their low level of education. For example, because they may not possess the skills desired in the formal economy, they may take up begging or scrapping metal. It is important to remember, however, that despite the high visibility of Roma that beg, those that engage in this practice make up only a small percentage of the Roma population in Italy (see for example OSCE, 2009; Sigona, 2005). As the OSCE (2009) reports, in order to secure employment, Roma immigrants must obtain a permit to stay, and this can be very difficult to do. Moreover, for those who do

² Two events in particular ignited prejudiced sentiments, elicited concerns regarding human rights violations, and warranted the OSCE's appraisal of the situation in Italy: (1) the 2007 killing of an Italian woman allegedly by a Romanian Roma, and (2) the 2008 burning of a Roma campsite on the outskirts of Naples, following the accusation that a Roma woman kidnapped a baby.

have documents permitting them to work legally, such documents often indicate that they live in ‘nomad camps’ or parts of town that are thought to be “migrant” (i.e. “bad”) areas. And for those who do work, it is likely that their employment is short-term and informal, and that they are paid a lower wage than non-Roma. On the other hand, it seems that many Romanian Roma in Italy have been successful in obtaining both residence permits and legal employment (OSCE, 2009).

Healthcare

Aside from their limited access to employment, the Roma in Italy are often not afforded equal access to healthcare, and many suffer poor health conditions due in part to their living conditions in the camps. The OSCE (2009) notes that many Roma are not registered with a doctor, few receive vaccinations, and those that require continuous medical attention are unable to receive such care. Additionally, their poor living conditions might be exacerbated when camps catch fire, as some Roma resort to using candles due to the lack of electricity and gas in these (typically unauthorized) living quarters. And yet, again the OSCE states that Romanian Roma generally fare better than other Roma, as many Romanian Roma are registered with a doctor.

Housing

The housing situation of the Roma in Italy has assumed a rather notorious reputation. Deemed “Campland” by the European Roma Rights Center (2000), Italy has, for several years, housed the Roma in settlements. Roma settlements are often located on the outskirts of industrialized or urban areas, and the living conditions vary depending on whether the settlements are authorized (legal) or unauthorized (illegal). Basic necessities, including on-site preschools and transportation to and from schools, are provided at

authorized settlements. Access to these camps is strictly monitored and residents of the camps must present identification in order to enter the camps. Additionally, residents must agree to certain rules in order to live there. Unauthorized settlements, on the other hand, are typically huts or cabins constructed by the Roma, and these facilities lack basic necessities, such as running water, electricity, and gas. The OSCE (2009) states that Roma in unauthorized camps are generally provided with healthcare and transportation to and from school. While living conditions in authorized settlements are generally better than those in unauthorized settlements, the OSCE reports that the Roma with whom they spoke during their visit express a desire to live in “regular housing among Italians” (p. 20). Recently, the term “Roma camp” has been replaced with “reception village for Roma,” though this appears to be more of a superficial attempt to offer the Roma a sense of belonging (something that was not emphasized in the past) and less of an accomplishment in the way of advancing human rights and social inclusion projects (OSCE, 2009; Sigona, 2005).

Aside from its apprehension of the unfavorable living conditions of many Roma in Italy, the OSCE (2009) expresses concern for the protection of the right to housing for this population. Italian authorities have forcefully evicted many Roma from their homes – at times without warning or recourse. In some cases, those that have been evicted have not been offered alternate housing. According to the OSCE, Italian authorities have recognized that evictions are not effective, because many Roma that have been evicted have subsequently moved to other unauthorized settlements. Further, the OSCE remarks that Italian authorities acknowledge that this kind of action does not succeed in integrating the Roma.

Considering the controversy generated by this specific “situation,” it appears plausible that the housing situation of the Roma in Italy is the crux of the social exclusion issue, and that without removing the institutional elements of, and structural barriers associated with, their living conditions, the Roma might not have the opportunity to be fully included in Italian society. Indeed, Sigona (2005) refers to ‘nomad camps’ as the “*loci* of the problem,” arguing that the camps reinforce the status quo. And in fact, while recommending that “...the practice of camps and reception centres should be discontinued” so that the Roma are more fully able to integrate into Italian society and are not subject to marginalization and poverty, the OSCE (2009) notes that the Italian government aims to close all unauthorized settlements as it seeks to provide more suitable housing conditions for the Roma (p. 12).

Despite the dismal housing conditions of many Roma in Italy, the FRA (2009) highlights a positive practice in Pisa, Italy, which has proven to be more successful in engaging the Roma in the discussion of their own social inclusion. In cooperation with Unità Sanitaria Locale (Local Sanitary Unit – USL) and funded by the region of Tuscany, the Città Sottili (Thin Cities) program aims to promote the social inclusion of Roma that live in extremely marginalized, poor conditions, and to support them as they transition to living in regular (e.g. rented) housing facilities. In this way, it seems, involving the Roma in the process of the closing of ‘nomad camps’ has afforded them the opportunity to become autonomous actors in their own lives. The FRA reports that as a result of this program more Roma children in the region regularly attend school.

Education

Scholars and policy reports also confirm the low attendance rate of Roma children, in Italy and elsewhere, and maintain that the Roma are frequently discriminated against in schools. For instance, the OSCE (2009) reports that as of 2008 only 1,500 of 5,000 to 7,000 Roma children living in Rome attended school, while Gobbo (2009) sets forth that as of 2009 about 1,200 of the 4,000 Roma (and Sinti) children living in the Piedmont region of Italy were enrolled in school. The OSCE expresses concern that although Roma children in authorized camps are more likely than those in unauthorized camps to attend school, many Roma do not complete secondary schooling. Frequent raids and evictions in unauthorized camps, as well as poverty, also disrupt the schooling of Roma children (European Roma Rights Center, 2000). Additionally, it is commonly believed that the Roma do not value education, which has led teachers to lower their expectations of Roma students (Gobbo, 2009).

Despite such barriers to education and stereotypes held by teachers and other non-Roma, all children in Italy, regardless of their legal status, have the *right* and the *obligation* to attend school (OSCE, 2009; Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali, n.d.). This double-edged “diritto-dovere” (“right-obligation”) to education appears to put the onus on the schools and the government to respect this right *as well as* on the Roma themselves to “opt into” the educational system (and thus, perhaps, to dominant society). It seems possible, though, that in the case of the Roma this “right-obligation” to education verges on “managing” the “other.” Therefore, as will be discussed below, educators and policymakers alike seek the *right kind* of education to solve ‘the Gypsy problem’ while also promoting and protecting human rights.

Intercultural Education: A Closer Look at the “Via Italiana”

Aims of Intercultural Education

Similar to its elusive operationalization of *social inclusion*, the EU’s definition of *intercultural education* appears rather vague. While the EU has endorsed intercultural education in recent years, it seems it has only loosely set the parameters of this educational paradigm. For example, according to the 2004 report entitled *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, the European Commission declares, “...the promotion of intercultural education, countering social exclusion by providing support to disadvantaged groups, is a priority of the European Union Community Action Programme in the field of education 2000-06” (p. 22). The same report further states that through intercultural education the European Commission aims to promote educational opportunities for the Roma from preschool through adult education, and to do so by extending support to *everyone* involved – teachers, administrators, Roma and non-Roma children, and Roma and non-Roma parents. Additionally, the EU designated 2008 as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (Kowalczyk, 2010-2011). While the EU’s characterizations of intercultural education often include terminology such as “combat discrimination and social exclusion” and “dialogue,” an all-inclusive, lucid definition seems to be lacking. Neither on its website nor in any of the policy reports cited in this thesis does the EU offer a clear, comprehensive definition of intercultural education.

As for the “via Italiana” of intercultural education, Italian scholars and policymakers offer a somewhat more tangible definition – to be sure, with a particularly Italian “spin.” For instance, Gobbo (2000) and Susi (1999) set forth that shifts in pedagogical discourse have been, and are, prompted by social and political changes.

Both Gobbo (2000) and Susi (1999) maintain that this type of education functions as a reply to internationalization, and that it is defined by human rights, peace, dialogue, interdependence, and respect for others and for the environment. Further, Gobbo (2000) asserts that in response to such transformations, such as increased mobility and advanced technology, intercultural education is “*desiderabile*” (“*desirable*”) (p. 9; Gobbo’s emphasis) – as it also seeks to foster respect for others. And as mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Gobbo (2000) affirms that intercultural education promotes the “*inclusiva partecipazione*” (“*inclusive participation*”) of students, including immigrants (Gobbo’s emphasis).

Though Gobbo et al. (2009) claim that Italian educational discourse has, for the past several years, favored intercultural education, the Italian Ministry of Public Education’s 2007 report provides an updated description of the “*via Italiana*” of intercultural education. In the 2007 report, the Italian Ministry of Public Education states,

La via italiana all’intercultura unisce alla capacità di conoscere ed apprezzare le differenze la ricerca della coesione sociale, in una nuova visione di cittadinanza adatta al pluralismo attuale, in cui si dia particolare attenzione a costruire la convergenza verso valori comuni.

[The Italian model of intercultural combines the ability to know and to appreciate differences, through its pursuit of social cohesion, in a new vision of citizenship suited to contemporary pluralism that gives particular attention to building common values.] (p. 10)

Additionally, the Italian Ministry of Public Education proposes that through “il confronto, il dialogo ed anche la reciproca trasformazione” (“confrontation, dialogue and also reciprocal transformation”), the “*via Italiana*” authorizes a mode of coexistence – or, in Italian, “*convivenza*” (p. 9). Gobbo (2000), too, submits that intercultural education

involves “*reciproca comunicazione*” (“*reciprocal communication*”) (p. 12; author’s emphasis). Moreover, though “*convivenza*” literally translates as “living together” or “cohabitation,” it is important to take into account the cultural elements of this term. *Convivenza* in Italy involves a closeness, a shared space, which in the larger EU context now appears to warrant social enfranchisement as a fundamental right. Though intercultural education is different from citizenship education, it seems to have some of the same traits, as the protection of human rights, a peaceful coexistence, and a semblance of shared understanding are absolute necessities in contemporary, diverse society (European, Italian, or otherwise).

The “Via Italiana” and Identity-formation: Hazards and Hopes

The Italian Ministry of Public Education (2007) as well as the European Commission (2004) put forward that in a multicultural society, like Italy and other European countries, intercultural education is necessary, and that it holds the promise of facilitating identity-making projects, producing citizens, generating a knowledge-based economy, breaking down barriers between cultures and combating stereotypes, and promoting and protecting human rights. This section explores the first of these features, and considers some of the possible opportunities and potential dangers associated with both intercultural education in general and the “*via Italiana*.”

To accept intercultural education as a mode of identity-formation means to render possible the disentanglement *and* the reconstruction of the identity of the Roma. In light of the previous chapter, which is devoted to tracing the multi-faceted history of the Roma, this population is evidently not a homogeneous group with a single, unified story. However, this fact is often forgotten. Without recognizing this reality, while sidestepping

the slippery slope of exoticism, it seems that stereotypes will inevitably be reproduced – even by educators themselves. Therefore, educators have a key role to fill as they are confronted with instructing an increasingly diverse student body.

As education, in general, involves many different actors – children, teachers, administrators, parents – intercultural education opens up the possibility for such actors to not only define themselves, but also to be defined by others. As mentioned above, the European Commission, Italian policymakers, and scholars have pointed to the power and potential of involving *everyone* in and through intercultural education (Italian Ministry of Public Education, 2007; European Commission, 2004; Gobbo, 2000). Nonetheless, while this brand of education offers the hope of clarifying, “once and for all,” the identity of the Roma, careful attention might be taken to allow the Roma themselves to be involved, accepted, and encouraged to take part in their own identity-formation. Otherwise, it would seem that such a well-intentioned model of education could instead have unintended (and perhaps detrimental) consequences. It should be noted that the EU and Italian policymakers have acknowledged the need to actively and directly involve the Roma in this dialogue (see for example European Commission, 2011; Italian Ministry of Public Education, 2007).

As noted in the Preface of this paper, most of the terms used to refer to the Roma population are problematic. Ian Hacking's (2006) “Making up people” serves as a useful point of departure for considering the power attributed to intercultural educational initiatives that seek to socially include a complex and still rather mysterious population, which has continuously encountered various forms of discrimination. As Hacking refers to the social construction of deviancy, he sets forth, “people spontaneously come to fit

their categories” (p. 100). Likewise, Hancock (2002) argues that if crime is viewed as an “ethnic problem,” the Roma will come to fit this label. One might also recall that education often serves as a means of regulation and management – and those who have been (and still are) labeled “other,” “deviant,” and “asocial” may be particularly vulnerable to even the most altruistic educational paradigms. As Gobbo (2011) and Kowalczyk (2010-2011) justly assert, (educational) projects geared toward “managing” diversity should do so with caution. Further, as intercultural education is believed to license identity-formation, special attention might be given to the ontological ways in which the Roma (children and parents alike) are (re-)made – and thus, socially included or excluded – by others, if they themselves are not the promoters of their own identity.

To that end, it is worth noting that Piasere (2004) and Asséo (as cited in Bravi & Sigona, 2006) maintain that despite enduring centuries of persecution the Roma are not passive spectators, but instead that they are a ‘popolo-resistenza’ (‘resistant people’). Interestingly, this label appears to be, like other labels, a social construction of Gadje scholars; for example, Hancock has not adopted this term. In this way, then, social inclusion and intercultural education projects (and therefore, identity-making projects) might further, or perhaps more readily, permit such “resistance” to be exposed and openly negotiated – by the Roma themselves. In Italy, in general, such open negotiation and active participation of the Roma appear to still be in the beginning stages.

Despite the disconnect between policy and practice³, policymakers and researchers alike allude to the inclusive participation and involvement of the Roma as resources, in both social inclusion projects and intercultural educational initiatives. As

³ See Symeou, Luciak, and Gobbo’s (2009) discussion of this disconnect in their reflections on the INSETRom project. Cushner (1998b) also alludes to this gap between policy and practice.

Jamie Kowalczyk (2010-2011) states, “the intercultural education discourse redefines the ‘migrant’s child’ as a ‘resource’” (p. 15). Indeed, distinguishing the Roma as such could potentially bolster the workforce and further cultivate a knowledge-based economy.

While this is surely commendable on one hand, from a different perspective one might consider the ways in which such “resources,” or “frontiers,” have been commodified in history. Anna Tsing (2005) offers a powerful example of this in her discussion of the destruction of rainforests in Indonesia. These rainforests provided a valuable resource for various groups of people, in different ways, and when each group recounted their story about this event (i.e. the *same* event) they were *completely different* from each other.

Rather than a territory being a “frontier” – that is, something “available” to be shaped, molded, industrialized by an individual or group of people – *people* are now the frontiers.

In other words, through intercultural education people are viewed as resources that need to be utilized. While this may not be an entirely new concept, it does appear to be a re-inscription of the parameters of both inclusion and educational projects, or as Kowalczyk (2010-2011) calls it, a “shoring up” of borders. However, if *individuals*, as resources, are not recognized as unique and socially constructed beings (on account of their interactions with others, as well as the time and place in which they live), how can intercultural education sustain itself as a means for promoting and protecting human rights and fostering respect for others? In other words, if individuals are not valued as distinct and crafted by an array of social factors, how can intercultural education uphold the promise of nurturing a space for peaceful coexistence? For whom, and why, are students, teachers, and parents, among others, called to participate in this conversation?

As Intercultural Dialogue has been embraced, scholars have noted that this is

simultaneously a time of fear *and* hope, in which “we” need to move forward by engaging social inclusion and intercultural education while bracing for potential risk. As Kowalczyk (2010-2011) notes, “It is not the ‘foreigner’ or ‘immigrant’ that is the threat, but his or her lack of acceptance or engagement in a European *way of living and reasoning*” (p. 14, author’s emphasis). Thus, one’s way of being in the world, rather than the individual himself or herself, is the threat. Likewise, Kowalczyk and Popkewitz (2005) contend that through discourses such as intercultural education “[t]he recognition and authorization of these [‘Western’] ways of being and systems of reasoning” further permits, if not promotes, “ghettoes of difference” that come to be “contained and managed” (p. 429). Bravi and Sigona (2006) also ascertain that although the current objectives of education may differ from, and perhaps be better reasoned and more well-meaning than, those during the Fascist regime, the results are more or less the same. In this way, the divide between “them” and “us” is still very much present, and there is a possibility that “they” are sorely misunderstood and misrepresented.

CHAPTER FOUR

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Let us not forget that learning takes place within schools as well as beyond the classroom. To be sure, some of life's lessons – for instance, caring for the environment and developing interpersonal skills – may be learned outside of school. Sometimes these things simply cannot be learned in school. Auxiliadora Sales Ciges and Rafaela Garcia Lopez (1997), for instance, assert that combating prejudice and stereotypes should not be confined to schools only, but that social inclusion, as a general policy, involves employment, healthcare, and housing, as well as people's general perceptions about each other in the community at large. Therefore, determining a technique for living together peaceably might have to be more so a way of life than merely a model of education. Moreover, if individuals, including those belonging to marginalized and minority populations, are to be true resources, it is likely that we could all gain something from the “inclusion” of what might be considered “traditional” Roma education. While this notion is in no way intended to essentialize the Roma, it *is* meant to recognize individuals of this diverse population as *reciprocal participants*, and therefore *resources*, in the intercultural education discourse. Further, envisioning such an intercultural approach to learning might open up the possibility for more authentic social inclusion.

As Ana Maria Gomes (1999) states, “The family is, for the majority of Gypsy communities, the central element of social organisation and also each member's

individual life” (pp. 167-168). Similarly, Tracy Smith (1997), who is of Roma descent, explains that Roma education includes learning about the economic, social, linguistic, political, and moral codes of society. She further sets forth that Roma children are taught to assert their independence early in life, and that they typically acquire practical skills by participating in and observing day-to-day activities within the community. One might consider, then, that gaining such competencies may provide one with a more sustainable sort of education, or learning, and better prepare students, as well as teachers and parents – moreover, everyone – for what Gian Piero Quaglino (2011) calls “the school of life.” That is, as education is meant to prepare one for the future and for living in the world, it appears that there is something to be gained from “traditional” Roma education.

This chapter highlights some projects that either have been or are still being conducted in Italy with regard to the social inclusion of the Roma, both of which take an intercultural approach. While both of these examples deal with education inside the school, they offer insight into the ways in which “intercultural” (“interculture”) – also called “interculturalism,” which is characterized by a “society-interculturalism-education nexus” (Pampanini, 2010b) – takes a distinctly Italian approach and might actually transcend the confines of the classroom. The INSETRom project, for one, sheds light on the particularities of the Italian context, as researchers at the University of Turin came with “extensive experience...in the research area” and employed their teacher-training expertise in their study of the education of Roma children in Italy (INSETRom, n.d.). Additionally, while the ‘Schools of Peace’ program acts as a supplement to education in Italian schools, the Community of Sant’Egidio has more recently initiated the ‘Right to School, Right to Future’ program. Both of these programs of the Community of

Sant'Egidio speak to the particular time and place from which they have emerged. It should be noted that both the INSETRom project and 'Right to School, Right to Future' have been recognized as best practices (FRA, 2009; INSETRom, n.d.).

INSETRom Project

Funded by the European Commission, the INSETRom project was carried out from December 2007 to November 2009 by educational institutions from eight EU Member States. According to its website, the project "aims to facilitate school and Roma family partnerships in order to establish an environment of collaboration and shared goals for children's education" (INSETRom, n.d.). As one of the eight partners of this project, a team of researchers in the School of Education at the University of Turin conducted a study of the educational situation of Roma students in the Piedmont region of Italy. Through questionnaires and interviews with non-Roma teachers, Roma parents, and Roma children at schools in Turin, the researchers at the University of Turin investigated the perceptions of Roma children and parents, as well as non-Roma teachers, toward each other and the educational process. Moreover, by taking an anthropological as well as an historical approach to studying the educational situation of the Roma, the researchers were able to distinguish the ways in which "...seemingly neutral educational plans have disguised policies of aggressive assimilation" (Gobbo, 2009).

In an effort to assess 'the Gypsy [educational] problem' as it relates to irregular school attendance, high dropout rates, and poor academic performance, which are often compounded by poor living conditions, prejudice, and discrimination, the INSETRom project sought to identify a tangible way in which to positively and successfully promote the social inclusion of the Roma through education. While Gobbo (2009) reflects on the

commonly-held belief that the Roma simply do not value education, she notes that both non-Roma and Roma identify obstacles to the educational achievement of Roma students. For instance, while teachers often set low expectations of Roma students in terms of their academic potential, Roma parents who were interviewed for the INSETRom project stated that they felt their voice was not heard by educators, and Roma children commented that they had difficulty staying on track with the fast pace at which teachers instruct. Additionally, based on the interviews conducted through the INSETRom project in Italy, Gobbo (2009) remarks that although it is generally accepted that high dropout rates are linked to the expectation that Roma youth will work, get married, and/or have children once they reach secondary schooling, the reasoning behind Roma students leaving school at that time may actually stem from their frustration with being discriminated against in school, by their peers. Further, by emphasizing the “problematic or negative impact [of] unexamined ideas and initiatives” based on “among other things, differences in power and authority,” Gobbo (2009) sheds light on the need for teacher training programs in order to provide opportunities to raise teachers’ awareness about Roma history, culture, and interpersonal issues, and to further assist teachers in effectively integrating and including the Roma in the education process (p. 532). In doing so, she points to the need for, and positive outcomes associated with, including the Roma in the dialogue regarding their own educational experience.

In general, non-Roma teachers, Roma parents, and Roma children responded positively to the intercultural approach of the INSETRom project. Most of the teachers interviewed expressed an interest in learning more about Roma culture, history, and language, as well as a desire to see Roma students stay in school, help students feel

comfortable in school, include Roma parents in school activities, and put an end to prejudice and stereotypes. The Roma parents that were interviewed expressed a desire for their children to succeed in school and for their children to be treated fairly, including not being given special treatment for poor performance or slow transitioning to school. Moreover, the Roma parents stated that they themselves wanted to be treated fairly and equally, including having a voice in their children's education. All but one of the Roma children interviewed spoke positively about school. While the children commented that they felt singled out at times and that the schoolwork was difficult, the support they mentioned receiving from their teachers and from their family members, who helped them with homework (which contradicts the general assumption that Roma parents do not get involved with this), suggests that they were overall satisfied with their educational experience. Further, the Roma students were able to recognize the practicality of education (e.g. obtaining a driver's license, and learning to read and write), while maintaining their lifestyles at the campsite with their families (Gobbo, 2009).

The findings from the INSETRom study in Italy suggest that parental involvement in school activities and raising the awareness of Roma culture and history are crucial steps to overcoming the social exclusion of Roma children from education. Perhaps, then, a more successful educational experience would involve a compromise between greater involvement¹ on the part of Roma parents as well as increased awareness of Roma culture on the part of non-Roma teachers. Despite critiques of the INSETRom

¹ A critical conceptualization of parental involvement might further enhance educators' understanding of and engagement with diverse populations. For instance, López, Scribner, and Mahitivanichcha (2001) maintain that parental involvement requires a nuanced approach, whereby the socio-cultural context is given careful consideration and parents are treated with respect and dignity.

project in Turin, Gobbo (2009) affirms that the findings from her team's study are not intended to be generalizable to the circumstances of Roma everywhere, even in other parts of Italy. Additionally, Symeou et al. (2009) note that there is a disconnect between educational policy in Italy and educational practice in Italian schools.

The Community of Sant'Egidio

Two programs of the Community of Sant'Egidio are particularly notable for their work with the Roma in Italy – both of which also involve non-Roma. By taking an intercultural, inclusive approach, the Community has sought to engage the Roma, among others, through the 'Schools of Peace' program and, more recently, the 'Right to School, Right to Future' program. Through the 'Schools of Peace' program, volunteers from the Community of Sant'Egidio meet with Roma and non-Roma children multiple times per week and organize “momenti di educazione all'incontro interculturale, all'amicizia, alla pace, al rispetto di tutto (ad esempio disabili e anziani), al rispetto dell'ambiente” [“moments of education regarding intercultural encounter, friendship, peace, respect for all (for example the disabled and the elderly), and respect for the environment”] (Ciani, 2008, p. 300). By fostering a friendship with Roma children and Roma parents², the Community of Sant'Egidio seeks to provide a supportive and sustainable means for closing the “cultural gap” and ensuring that all children have the chance to complete at least primary school. In addition, Paolo Ciani (2008) notes that the children are considered unique, given individualized care, and known by name. Twice a year, the Community of Sant'Egidio organizes a celebration of the achievements of 'Schools of

² Therefore, by involving the parents in activities, it appears that the Community of Sant'Egidio avoids taking the children away from their parents. As Piasere notes, this practice of removing children from their families has led many Roma parents to not trust mainstream education and the authorities.

Peace’ (Community of Sant'Egidio, 2011; Ciani, 2008). Indeed, such instances of “convivenza” – coming together in a shared space, as friends – are particularly Italian. Moreover, this program grew out of a time (the late 1960s) and place (Italy) in which peace and solidarity were idealized through political and social movements (Community of Sant'Egidio, 2011; Susi, 1999).

In 2008, as a path to citizenship has been recognized as a fundamental right (see for example Italian Ministry of Public Education, 2007), the Community of Sant'Egidio initiated the ‘Right to School, Right to Future’ project, which provides academic scholarships to both Roma and non-Roma students. Considering that this project began after the EU launched the social inclusion project, it appears to take a more rigorous and comprehensive approach in terms of promoting social inclusion, combating discrimination, and monitoring and supporting these endeavors. The FRA (2009) reports, however, that due to limited funding this program may not be able to sustain itself, which substantiates researchers’ and policymakers’ claim that efforts in Italy to socially include the Roma are often weakened at the local level (Gobbo et al., 2009; European Commission, 2004).

According to its website, the Community of Sant'Egidio is “dedicated to evangelisation and charity” (Community of Sant'Egidio, 2011). While the Community of Sant'Egidio works with the Roma on various programs, such as ‘Schools of Peace’ and ‘Right to School, Right to Future,’ its mission is also fulfilled through its work with many other populations throughout the world. Taking into account its ties with the Catholic

Church and evangelism³, its involvement with what are considered “less fortunate” populations, and its general promotion of peace and conflict-resolution efforts, it is possible to discern a theme of social promotion. Indeed, such phrasing as “schools help families in their child-raising tasks” and “promoting solidarity with the less fortunate,” connote intentions to “save” those who are considered (perhaps perpetually) less fortunate (Community of Sant'Egidio, 2011). Nevertheless, the Community of Sant'Egidio claims to impart the idea that *everyone* experiences some form of suffering, and that ‘nessuno sia così povero da non poter fare qualcosa per gli altri’ (‘no one is so small to not be able to do something for others’) (Ciani, 2008, p. 301). In this way, ‘Schools of Peace’ and ‘Right to Schools, Right to Future’ are meant to provide children with a positive outlet and an alternative to situations in which they may turn to violence or “deviance.” As one might imagine, the moralistic particularities of the Christian Community of Sant'Egidio rather significantly characterize its well-intentioned projects.

Here, one might reflect on Sigona's (2005) statement that “volunteers and aid workers who work on the edge between the two worlds [of the Gadge and the Roma] are also active in this process [of creating and reproducing stereotypes], sometimes facilitating the exchange of information, sometimes obstructing it” (p. 752). Similarly, Sigona (2005) and Themelis (2009) suggest that policies that emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, in effect, aimed to “save the Gypsies” as they concurrently reinforced stereotypes. Nevertheless, it appears that despite what may be a covert objective of “social promotion” of the Roma, the Community of Sant'Egidio offers a means of

³ See Piasere's (2004) discussion of the growing involvement of the Roma in the Evangelical movement, through which, he argues, the Roma are able to reinvent themselves.

engaging in dialogue with the Roma and seeks to cultivate a space for peaceful coexistence. As Ciani (2008) states, this is a process that takes time – longer than a day or a year. Little by little, he maintains, programs like ‘Schools of Peace’ demonstrate that it is possible to live together peaceably, for the benefit of everyone. Moreover, efforts to give the Roma *themselves* a louder voice in this dialogue might be commended.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUDING REMARKS

“None of us is going anywhere, and we really have only one choice: to learn to live together.”

– Hancock, 2002, p. 109

Amidst proclamations that “the situation of the Roma in Italy” poses an emergency, it is easy to forget that the Roma make up only 0.23 percent of the entire population there (European Commission, 2011). Juxtaposed with the fact that Italy ranks fourth among European countries with the highest immigrant populations (Susi, 1999), however, it is possible to discern how Italians generally perceive the Roma residing there – that is, grouped together with other immigrants, as “foreigners,” and therefore something with which to be dealt. To be sure, though, the Roma represent a particular problem in Italy that is distinct from ‘the immigrant problem.’ While examining various particularities and particularisms of the Italian context sheds light on the kind of “problem” the Roma resemble there, it also further elucidates ‘the Gypsy problem’ in general and gives meaning both to the ways in which the question of “what to do with them¹” is approached and to how one perceives of being in the world.

Reflecting on the rather recent history of Italy, which was unified in 1861, informs the discussion of the relevance of borders and their role in continuously identifying and re-making the “other.” For instance, one might recall that many southern

¹ Here, “them” refers not only to the Roma but also to other marginalized and persecuted peoples.

Italians migrated to northern Italy during the 1960s in order to find work, often in factories. Gobbo (2000) sets forth that this migration presented an opportunity to reconstruct the identity of northern Italy through education as well as through employment, yet she and Kowalczyk and Popkewitz (2005) note that many northern Italians considered the southern Italian migrants to be foreigners – in their “own” country. One might also note that Italy was a country of emigration prior to the 1980s, but that since that time it has experienced a significant increase in immigration (see for example Storia, 2009; Kowalczyk & Popkewitz, 2005; Susi, 1999). In addition, Italians who emigrated to the United States during the early 20th century were often perceived as different and problematic in the American context (Olneck & Lazerson, 1974). Moreover, Susi (1999) proposes that multiculturalism presently serves as a redefining moment for Italy as he ponders the country’s preoccupation with its cultural and religious identity. Further, one would be remiss to neglect two additional, key features of the Italian context, which further accentuate the “problematic” nature of “the situation of the Roma in Italy”: (1) the tremendous economic difficulty that Italy currently faces (Bowley, 2011), and (2) the fact that “Italy has one of the lowest birthrates in the European Union” (Povoledo & Donadio, 2011). Considering the importance of social inclusion projects for bolstering the economy, Soros (2010) states,

In a Europe of falling birthrates, the Roma are one of the few fast-growing groups...The well-being of the Roma children who will be the European workforce of the future is therefore not just a question of human rights, but economic necessity.

In this case, Italy’s future may depend, in large part, on the inclusion of the Roma; yet for a population thought to be ‘resistant’ to integration and social inclusion in dominant

society, Italy, among other nation-states, as well as the Roma may be at a loss. Perhaps, then, intercultural education restores the hope of the social inclusion project and offers a compromise, a form of peaceable, if not peaceful, coexistence, and a semblance of shared understanding in a diverse society – in theory, if not also in practice. As Soros (2010) further remarks,

The key is to educate a new generation of Roma who succeed in society but do not seek to melt into the general population and retain their identity as Roma.

In this way, then, it appears that much of the broader social inclusion project is geared toward strengthening the economy.

In light of these factors, it is possible to comprehend how an unconventional population, like the Roma, who tend to live outside the norms of nation-states, is cast as the “other” in Italy. For a country so concerned with its cultural and religious identity, according to Susi (1999), finding a way to include the Roma in its national fabric is indeed a weighty responsibility, regardless of the role of intergovernmental organizations such as the EU. Further, taking into account Italy’s history of “re-educating” the Roma to be subjects of the State (see for example Bravi & Sigona, 2006), engineers and facilitators of the intercultural education paradigm would do well to provide training opportunities for educators in order to learn from the past and more fully realize the intended, theoretical aims of this educational model; indeed, Gobbo (2009), Amatucci (1999), and Ciges and Lopez (1998) have stressed the importance of teacher training, as well. Further, while the situation in Italy may be comprehensible, discrimination of the Roma and other marginalized populations is often considered unlawful in the greater EU context, where human rights are heavily promoted and monitored.

Acknowledging the complexities of the circumstances in Italy also substantiates the interconnectedness of the four target areas of the social inclusion project. For instance, if the parents of a (Roma or non-Roma) child are unemployed and/or have limited access to healthcare and/or live in an area segregated from the majority of society, the child's school attendance and academic performance will likely suffer. While these four discrete, yet interrelated, target areas offer a means of assessing the social inclusion project, the overall social exclusion of the Roma in Italy and elsewhere supports the notion that promoting and protecting human rights requires more than implementing a rigid model of education. Nevertheless, education is a starting point for nurturing respect for each other. As Cushner (1998b) and Ciges and Lopez (1998) contend, by working collaboratively with a range of agents outside the school and adapting the intercultural education model to the particular context, educators might facilitate a more authentic dialogue and intercultural education might hold the promise of fostering some form of peaceable coexistence and shared understanding. In this way, lifelong learning – a component of the EU's social inclusion project that is underdeveloped in Italy (European Commission, 2004) – might serve as an enriching mode of living and being in the world, not only through education in the classroom but also through what Quaglino (2011) refers to as the formation of the self. To that end, the Italian Ministry of Public Education (2007), the European Commission (2004), and scholars (see for example Gobbo, 2000; Susi, 1999) have acknowledged the need to involve the Roma as active participants who reciprocally enrich the educational experience of everyone involved.

Levy (2000) concedes that a framework for dealing with diversity is necessary, and he proposes intercultural dialogue as a possible framework for coexistence. In this regard, through the social inclusion project the EU endorses intercultural education as an inclusive means of promoting and protecting human rights, combating discrimination, and facilitating identity-formation (European Commission, 2004). In theory, intercultural education is intended to be an “alternative to assimilation” on one hand, and to fragmentation and separatism on the other hand (Gobbo et al., 2009, p. 7). While the “multiculturalism of fear” frames “situations” like ‘the Gypsy problem’ as such – a *problem*, rather than an *opportunity* – Cushner (1998a) avows that the intercultural education discourse perceives of immigration and diversity as *opportunities* and the so-called “other” as a *resource*. And yet, Cushner (1998b) notes that the gap between policy and practice is not confined to the Italian context. Because intercultural education privileges identity and emphasizes difference (while acknowledging similarities amongst such differences), a downfall of this educational model is that it opens up the possibility of misperceiving and misrepresenting the other – that is, anyone other than oneself. On the other hand, as Wendy Brown (2006) demonstrates through her discussion of teaching tolerance, sweeping identity and “difference” under the rug may incite potentially hazardous consequences. That is, by not talking about contentious issues (e.g. identity, practices, and beliefs) such controversies and presumptions are allowed to ruminate and possibly, ultimately explode in violent ways.

Considering the identity-formation potentials associated with intercultural education, one might argue that this educational paradigm has a unique and essential role:

to give everyone the opportunity to identify themselves and to engage in the intercultural dialogue, in order to seek a peaceable, if not peaceful, coexistence and a semblance of shared understanding in a diverse society. Without opting into this dialogue, however, an individual, or a 'resistant' group, like the Roma, might run the risk of being perpetually misperceived and misrepresented. If social inclusion projects are forced upon groups of people or individuals, like the Roma, they might not have the option to opt out of this dialogue, thus potentially resulting in cultural extinction and undermining the purpose of social inclusion projects. Moreover, choosing whether or not to participate in this dialogue in their own way might be easier for Romanian Roma, who are EU citizens and therefore have greater access to social services, than for the Roma from former Yugoslavia that are *de facto* stateless and possibly not considered refugees; thus the relevance of borders and the "shoring up" of boundaries (Kowalczyk, 2010-2011). Nevertheless, programs like the Community of Sant'Egidio's 'Right to School, Right to Future' appear to offer a tangible means for social inclusion by allowing one to engage in intercultural dialogue.

When asking what the Roma themselves want there surely cannot be one answer, considering the varied composition of this population. Though the popular beliefs might be that 'the Gypsy problem' is rooted in their nomadic lifestyle, that the Roma pose a threat to public security, and that their poor living conditions are irreconcilable because of these two factors, it is more likely the case that the particular "problem" that the Roma represent is that they are such a diverse people. As Damian Le Bas (2010) explains, Gypsies, Roma, Irish Travellers, Sinti, and the like are not just one, homogenous "they."

Therefore, it is difficult – if not impossible – to determine what “they” want. In this sense, “the situation of the Roma” may signify a redefining moment for nation-states, as borders are re-inscribed, if not all-together called into question (Luhmann, 1997). In addition, while claims for minority recognition are laudable, perhaps greater agency might be afforded to the Roma and misperceptions might be sidestepped if they are recognized as individuals (Phillips, 2007). On the other hand, as Charles Taylor (1992) affirms, the morality of individualism depends on cohabitation and interaction between human beings. Otherwise, he maintains, individuals become fragmented from each other and there is no possibility of shared understanding. Perhaps intercultural education restores this possibility, as it simultaneously privileges the formation of the self and calls everyone to engage in a dialogue. In this way, efforts like the INSETRom project, which provided Roma parents and children as well as non-Roma teachers an opportunity to voice their own perceptions about the educational experience, might be applauded, replicated, and developed, while the facilitators of these initiatives take into account the particular contexts in which these programs are implemented.

Though “the situation of the Roma” in Italy, ‘the Gypsy problem’ in general, and the intercultural education discourse are important issues in and of themselves, one might still wonder what these matters have to do personally with himself or herself. First, as Susi (1999) and Gobbo (2000) point out, because we are socially constructed beings ‘the Gypsy problem’ is also the problem of the Gadge. Though someone who lives in a remote setting might believe that his or her actions do not have any influence on someone else’s existence in a far-away country, that is not always the case. For instance,

international education organizations presently acknowledge intercultural communication as an important component of students' study abroad experience, and seek to assess the ways in which study abroad programs facilitate this form of communication (IES Abroad, 2011). Indeed, this has implications for students' ways of living and being in the world as they develop their communication skills, interact with others, and enrich their understanding of themselves while studying in another country. Overall, the intercultural education discourse as well as the educational narrative of the Roma in Italy might serve as a cautionary tale for other programs (educational or otherwise) designed to socially include "deviant" populations, whether in Chicago, Illinois; Rome, Italy; or elsewhere.

While the realities of a pluralistic society ordered by nation-states may not always allow one to embrace the kind of world envisioned in John Lennon's "Imagine," as Leonardo Piasere (2004) ponders in the final pages of *I Rom d'Europa*, it seems that engaging in dialogue is a critical first step toward living in the world today. Perhaps *in spite of* its rather utopian traits intercultural education is equipped to initiate this dialogue as it aids in identifying and giving agency to other ways of being, ways of knowing, and ways of educating. Following Tsing's (2000, 2004) caution with regard to "charismatic packages," like the intercultural education discourse, in order to authentically affect social inclusion and advance human rights we might not be seduced by an unexamined brand of intercultural education that poses merely as a trendy aesthetic. In this way, resolving the question of "what to do *with* them" might become more feasible.

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VITA

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